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Observing, navigating, exploring: The fourfold path of nourishing wrath and others

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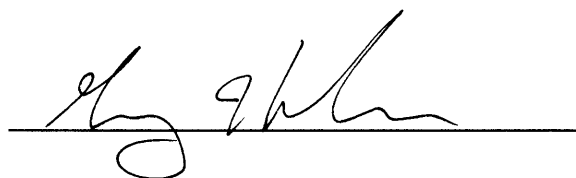
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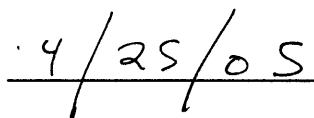
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Observing, Navigating, Exploring:
The Fourfold Path of Nourishing Wrath and Others

(TITLE)

BY
Greg Holden

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**Observing, Navigating, Exploring: The Fourfold Path Of Nourishing Wrath
And Others**

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Creative Writing Thesis

9 April 2005

Dedications

I would like to thank the late Dr. Martin Scott, English Department, Eastern Illinois University, for all his help in the production of this thesis, the fruits of which he did not live to see.

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Abstract

A good poet to illustrate the distinction between modernism and postmodernism would be George Oppen (1908-1986). I believe Oppen's "objectivism" – coupled with a judicious use of deliberate ambiguity – nicely gets us past the postmodern insistence on the illusions of selfhood, reason, and order by insisting on the centrality of the perceiver/thinker amid the objective chaos of perceptions/ideas, while at the same time recognizing the multi-vocal construction of the perceiver/thinker. I believe the self may project its illusions onto reality, but not all reality (including the "self") is always thereby a false image. I have tried to fulfill Oppen's prophecy of a "post postmodern" poetry through examining and describing the singular by virtue of the plural and by using ambiguous poetic forms illustrative of our multi-vocal nature. Only by questioning our sense of "place" – and thereby ourselves as positioned in that "place" – can we begin to imagine new places and go there; following up on Jean Baudrillard's metaphor of the postmodern situation as the map taking precedence over the territory, I believe we need to make new maps with the old ones in mind. I believe my poetry fulfills this ideal.

**Observing, Navigating, Exploring: The Fourfold Path Of Nourishing Wrath
And Others**

Introduction:	"Oppen and the Post Postmodern"	1
Poems:	Part One: Observing	28
	"You've Got To"	29
	"Helpings"	30
	"They, Way Out In A Field"	31
	"Two-Bit Cut"	32
	"It's Over"	33
	"Whispering"	34
	"The Death Of Her"	35
	"Thirst"	36
	"Dark On Dark"	37
	Part Two: Navigating	38
	"Directions"	39
	"Theme"	40
	"Repetition"	41
	"The Theater Of Our Epiphanies"	42
	"The Universe"	43
	"Word Things"	44
	"Let Us Praise Fire"	46
	"Landfill"	49
	Three: Exploring	50
	"Fetal Wreck"	51

“Dead Fly In Toilet”	52
“Eight Uses For The Urine Of Celebrities Serving Hard Time”	53
“The Car That Cut A Town In Half”	54
“The Big Grain Mill On North Street In The Middle Of Town”	58
“The Fourfold Path Of Nourishing Wrath”	60
“Curtains Are Incredible”	75

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Observing, Navigating, Exploring: The Fourfold Path Of Nourishing Wrath And Others

Introduction: Oppen and the Post Postmodern

The postmodern situation: without our maps we are lost; with our maps, we are lost.

Jean Baudrillard uses the metaphor of the map to describe the epistemological situation of the postmodern subject (Baudrillard 1-3). The map is a representation of a segment of space comprised of abstract grids of organization superimposed on an image of a landmass of a certain length and breadth; we thus can locate ourselves in reality by locating ourselves on the map. Just so, we come to know our world by organizing our experience according to categories that we then project onto our world, "gridding" it a certain way; the world we come to understand is merely a projection we read back into our experiences. We locate or situate ourselves in some conception of "reality" constructed out of our ways of organizing experience. We live in a world mapped out for us by ourselves.

However, as opposed to traditional idealist epistemology¹ (which the above description resembles) the postmodernist stresses at least one of three things: 1) the categories we impose on our experience are imposed on us as a matter of *social force* whether we realize it or not; 2) these categories (roles, expectations, values, goals) are ultimately purely *subjective* in nature and do not reflect the way things really are; and 3) the way things really are will forever be unknown to us,

since our lone mode of understanding our world is through the only medium in which these suspicious categories are capable of being constructed in the first place – *language*.²

It is from these three propositions of postmodernism that the map metaphor gains its traction. The lines on a map are not found in the world, they are abstract entities plotted out over the image of a landmass for the purpose of locating oneself; similarly, language is an abstract entity responsible for the categories (grids) we impose on our world for the purpose of situating ourselves. These language “grids” (or categories or words or phrases or sentences) are the ways we are constrained to think given the language we use and how we are expected to use it. Language and thought, it is thus said, are the same. If language can be shown to be faulty *per se*, then anything issuing from it must be – if not downright false – at least untrustworthy.³ To challenge one’s situation *vis a vis* a given map is to challenge the authority of the map maker – which turns out to be society, since language is a shared, social entity. It is also to challenge our own authority over ourselves, since our private thoughts are made out of language: if we are not responsible for the way language maps out our world because language is not our own, then our thoughts are not our own, either.⁴

How each postmodern thinker explains his or herself varies, of course, but a general suspicion over language and its usefulness does not so vary. Many contemporary poets do likewise. I bring up the metaphor of the map as a means of introducing the importance of *place* in a poem, and relevance of place to the poem’s *voice*. Stuart Dybek points out this intimate connection when he claims that for some writers “place informs style as well as voice” and that “place is a term for an obsessive return by an artist . . . to images that convey both an inner and

outer typology” (Dybek 106). If we situate ourselves with regard to how we cognitively map out our world, then (as Kristeva shows us) the description of physical location will inevitably redound to the subject inhabiting the location, whether that subject be the voice of a character in a poem or the voice of the poet his or herself (Kristeva 64-6). If it is true (as David Baker puts it) that “no single position is ever sufficient to articulate our lives, but rather we are *always* in several places at once” (Baker 28), then the notion of place in a poem begs to be reexamined, as the authority of the speaker in the poem is being challenged as well: if we inhabit several places at once, aren’t we several selves at once, too? What would the “inner typology” of a multiple self inhabiting multiple places at one and the same time look like? How exactly can a poet exploit language to show the displaced nature of subjectivity if language itself is not designed to do so, if the very categories of thought we use to grid our environment (and hence ourselves) are useful only insofar as they *exclude* multiple perspectives?

Without the force of the social – without recourse to a single, transparently true, referentially faithful language – all of our maps are different.

“Postmodernism,” as a term, was applied to poetry in the 1970’s retrospectively, as a means of distinguishing what (then) contemporary poets were doing as opposed to the earlier “modern” poetics of Eliot, Pound, and Williams (to name the major figures).⁵ The crux of the distinction appears to devolve around an epistemological issue: the belief in the existence of an epistemology adequate to capturing reality, grounding morality and establishing selfhood. The modernist believes experience has to be disassembled and put back together again, perhaps in a slightly different fashion, to highlight what is “really going on.”⁶ What is important to keep in

mind is that what is “really going on” – experience as such – is capable of being known for the modernist, who merely believed that previously established ways of understanding social life and traditional patterns of meter and verse were incapable of describing life amid the rapid changes in the West after the industrial revolution.

Postmodernism, as a response to modernism, closely resembles philosophical skepticism, the denial of even the very possibility of being able to understand what’s really going on. All modes of understanding reality (social, psychological, epistemological -- however one cares to conceive of a mode of understanding) are inadequate to the task because they all necessarily distort the real and, as if to rub salt into the wound, there is no way of justifying any one mode of understanding as being better or worse than any other. Some postmodernists even deny there is anything like “reality” at all – no stable form of social system, no permanent moral values, no secure self to rely on, no objectivity external to the subject. There is only language as an inherently meaningless system of sounds and marks which bear absolutely no connection to a reality beyond the confines of language itself.

A good poet to illustrate the distinction between modernism and postmodernism would be George Oppen (1908-1986). Oppen avowedly made it his purpose to describe – objectively – the concrete act of perception and the reality(ies) laying hidden within it. He is said by his editor Michael Davidson to have scribbled notes for his poems on anything he had available at the time, to render in writing perceptions and ideas – the stuff of experience – immediately after they had occurred (Davidson 86-7). Oppen’s poetry is spare and small, a style almost journalistic in its approach to a subject matter, an extreme economy coupled with accuracy of description.

Oppen's most famous poem, *Of Being Numerous* (for which he won the 1969 Pulitzer Prize), is a meditation on humanity's need for society, that it is humanity's paradoxical desire to be a unique individual in the midst of being the same among many. This need for the many while struggling to be one of course resembles the existentialist point that it is only through the many that the self can be achieved ["The isolated man is dead, his world around him exhausted/And he fails! He fails, that meditative man! And indeed they cannot 'bear' it" (Oppen, *Numerous* 88).]. Oppen was an admirer of Kierkegaard and Heidegger, and his meditations on selfhood in *On Being Numerous* resemble theirs: Kierkegaard's demand that we must get beyond our "public" selves in order to find our unique, inner selves and Heidegger's insistence (following up on Kierkegaard) that *das Man* (the generic social self) is the basis for *da-sein*'s very being.⁷ Oppen, influenced by this tradition (Davidson 80-1), sought to go beyond appearances to get at things themselves: if, as Oppen declared, poetry is an act of perception, then perception itself is laden with the social. That is what must be got around to find the object as such:

[There] are, as poetry intends, clear pictures of the world in verse
 which means only to be clear, to be honest, to produce the
 realization of reality and to construct a form out of no desire for the
 trick of gracefulness, but in order to make it possible to grasp, to
 hold the insight which is the content of the poem. (Oppen, *Place*
 188)

Oppen's methodology, stated in his *The Mind's Own Place*, shows us that form is considered an ancillary to the content of the poem, which is conceived of as an attempt to come to terms with

perception through the insight it affords the reflective subject – the poem is considered a moment of thought itself. A poem is an “insight” in the sense of being an act of knowledge occurring in and through “clear pictures,” and language can connect to and accurately describe reality if only the details are provided in the right way and arranged in the proper manner and personal stylistics do not interfere with the guiding idea embedded in the poem’s image(s): that is, if the experience of the reader encountering a poem matches the experience of the perceiver who wrote the poem. As Charles Olson puts it, a poem is a transfer of energy from the poet to the reader of the poem, and that transfer should include as little “lyrical interference of the ego” as possible (Olson 614-20).

Oppen appears to agree with Olsen: the form of a poem, then, needs to be revelatory of the kind of experience being described and should not be wedded to any particular established form. For Olsen, the form of a poem is a combination of two elements (incestuous twins, he calls them): the syllable and the line – the music to the ear and the “pressure of breath” (Olsen 614), and these two elements must obey one cardinal rule:

FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT. (Or so it
got phrased by one, R. Creeley, and it makes absolute sense to me, with this
possible corollary, that right form, in any given poem is the only and
exclusively possible extension of content under hand. There it is brothers, sitting
there, for USE. (Olson 614)

What the poem is about must take precedence over the form the poem must take. For Oppen, this kind of liberatory stance took the form of a life of scribbles on anything he had available to

him. That kind of devotion to personal insight is truly “projective” – his *project* was to effect that “transfer of energy” in words so precise and welded to their nearly-immediate occurrences that there was little or no leakage in the transfer (Davidson 78-82).

It is interesting that this description of the act of poetry matches French post-structuralist philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s distinction between the “machinic” and the “mechanical.” To crudely summarize Deleuze’s insight here, a “machinic” arrangement of elements enacts a transfer of energy, a passage from one state of being to another. The lips of a child on his or her mother’s breast are machinic – one form of energy is being transformed into another (Deleuze, *Plateaus* 40-3; 88-92; Deleuze, *Dialogues* 103-5; Massumi 197). This arrangement of elements need not have been intentional, and in nature, they never are; pure luck, the mere piling up of materials and the forces concomitant with the shaping of those materials is a machinic arrangement of elements (Massumi 62-5). In comparison, “mechanical” is a pre-arranged pattern imposed on assemblages in order to maintain a social identity or to perform social labor none of the assemblages would do without the imposition of the social pattern (the ideological “grid”) (Deleuze, *Plateaus* 514-20; Massumi 112-3).

If poetry is a transfer of energy in Olsen’s sense, then it is a machinic assemblage transferring the felt experience of one individual (the poet) into another (the reader); it ought not be “mechanical” – following established patterns for the sake of maintaining a tradition or in order to be accepted into one society of poets or another or to be published according to some poetic norm. Deleuze and Foucault’s conception of the postmodern has much to do with his sensitivity to the actual forces operating in and through the individual doing the perceiving, thinking,

speaking, and thus both recognize the “strata” out of which social agents are composed (Deleuze, *Plateaus* 49-51, 480-1). Deleuze believed, much like Foucault, that the purpose of language is to impose social force, rather than to relay accurate descriptions – which if true would trump any “objectivist” claims to faithfully transfer energy from one perceiver to another. Why persist in writing to capture an experience if all uses to which language is put reveal it to be nothing more than an arbitrary, social construct (Derrida, *Positions* 46-52), if force rather than reason rules language, if all reference between words and reality is a construct at once justifying and apologizing for inequitable social relations?⁸ Don’t Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault’s versions of post-structuralism make objectivism (and imagism) seem rather naïve and quaint?

Maybe, though, Oppen’s fondness for existentialism points a way forward: the mind is its own place. I add: the owner of the map can situate his or herself by encountering his or herself *vis a vis* the maker(s) of the maps they have unwittingly inherited: in a playful encounter with other maps (ideologies, discourse communities, cultural mores) in our imagination our *stand* with regard to our own maps become clear; in imaginative collision with foreign ideologies, past ideologies, alternate ideologies – perhaps even fictional ideologies of our own spontaneous making – the lineages of our own map becomes clear. We move from having to rely on maps given over to us in the process of socialization to our taking possession of the maps themselves. New grids can be traced, new routes can be planned, new destinations can be plotted – but only if our maps are clearly and distinctly known to us as artifacts drawn by hands other than our own. Dissonance is necessary to selfhood and growth.

Nomads trace their own paths, having thrown away their maps.⁹

Let us not forget, however, that the maps we inherit were given over to us in the medium of language, in terms of the spoken voice and the written word – the medium of meaning.¹⁰

Voices, orders, maps and grids – all are equivalent terms from the standpoint of one's social identity:

“I” is not an expressive subject, only a linguistic marker indicating what body is addressed by the whispered imperative immanent to that particular position within that particular state of things. What effectively speaks is the transpersonal agency that creates the context by orchestrating a local encounter between content and expression and by bringing that body to the “I” of that site. The “I” does not inhabit the body, but is attached to the place of enunciation. It insinuates itself into the body tapped for possession by the “one” haunting the premises. I mouths one's words. Every body has as many “I”s as there are “ones” in the world it moves through. (Massumi 33)

However, can someone become their *own* person and not the person their socio-cultural milieu grids them to be? People can, I think, through the process of encountering as many different voices as possible, by entertaining as many different maps as they can in their imaginations, by becoming nomads to themselves.

I think Frank Bidart's *In the Third Hour of the Night* captures nicely what I would like to do in my own poetry: create a certain space in the imagination in which voices are given free play, thereby foregrounding the *listener* of those inner voices. Voices are first of all *heard* – they are

comprehended in some way by a someone; as Bakhtin tells us, words are uttered/written to participate in a dialogical act – as responses intending the response of the listener/reader (Bakhtin 279-80). The listener inherent in the imagination is where our selfhood lies, where we encounter our own uniqueness before it is given breath; if, after all, we want to give it breath. Whether or not we even speak, we encounter ourselves as we listen to the voices (and the forces informing those voices) running through our imaginations. Bidart's poem, in this regard, takes two distinct voices and blends them together into one long elegy on the transitory nature of all being; one narrative is historical, examining the Italian sculptor Benvenuto Cellini's dealings with the Pope to produce his art, and the other is mythical, describing an Australian aboriginal myth. In both, the senses of the binary pair of terms "inside/outside" is considered. Toward the end of the section on Benvenuto, he writes:

*As if your hand fumbling to reach inside
reached inside*

*As if light falling on the surface
fell on what made the surface*

*As if there were no scarcity of sun
on the sun. (Bidart 31)*

The inside of our imagination is where we confront our outside – the outside voices (and forces) that have gone into making us. What we ideally want to do is examine those voices in concert with other voices in an act of imaginative perception – what Kant would term an act of transcendental apperception¹¹ – but in such a way that Derrida's sense of *différance* is preserved between the "I" gridded by society and the grids applied to its terrain by the "I," by the many

voices making up the “one” and the “one” who understands his or her role as listener of voices.

Who is it who listens?

In Bidart’s poem, the voices collide with regard to one another, producing a universal sense of melancholy over the reality of death – of the human fate of being only able to interrogate surface realities (the fact of death) in asking the metaphysical question “Why death?” Those plural voices give rise to the recognition that:

*Infinite the forms, finite
tonight as I find again in the mirror the familiar appeaseless*

eater’s face

*Ignorant of cause or source or end
in silence he repeats*

Eater, become food

*All life exists at the expense of other life
Because you have eaten and eat as eat you must*

Eater, become food

*unlike the burning stars
burning merely to be (Bidart 35)*

I say: traveler, take your several maps and compare their grids with regard to your perceptions of the terrain – the differences between them will enable you to situate yourself while always bearing in mind their differences. Eater, become food. Traveler, become mapmaker; make your own map out of the only material you have available, the maps already on hand. Your destination will be known only with regard to your map’s orientation toward north – but be assured there *is* a north – relative though it may be to your particular location on this particular earth.

Oppen described the purpose of objectivism as:

an account of the poet's perception, of the act of perception; it is a test of sincerity, a test of conviction, the rare poetic quality of truthfulness. They [the objectivists] meant to replace by the data of experience the accepted poetry of their time, a display by the poets of right thinking and right sentiment, a dreary waste of lies. That data was and is the core of what "modernism" restored to poetry, the sense of the poet's self among things.

So much depends on the red wheelbarrow. (Oppen, *Place* 175)

So much does: as if situating himself amid the things of his environment, Oppen scribbled down his perceptions. Among his unpublished notes, he left behind the following:

I think I have written what I
set out to say --- I need
not now turn to narrative

I have told not narrative, but
ourselves --- no narrative but ourselves. (Oppen, *Fragments* 186)

To find ourselves, to restore a sense of self despite the pull and thrust of modern life, is what objectivism meant for Oppen. The neo-postmodernism I advocate is a sort of return to the roots of modernism by virtue of the postmodern project – to recognize the inherent instability of any given form of thought, to expose the pretense of certainty and eternal truth in any given ideology, to dispute the false promise of closure inherent in narratives as such, to understand that the unitary self is plural and open, composed out of many (social) voices and constituted out of many forces (cultural and – yes – biological).

There is no one form to accomplish this, no one meter to arrest it, no one lyric to record the numerous nature of individuality. It would play among forms while not settling on any one of them – much the way Olson's *Maximus*, William Carlos Williams' *Paterson*, and Ed Dorn's *Gunslinger* are structured: multiple voices, clashing styles, temporal inconstancy, contextually variable. Yet, both *Maximus* and *Paterson* are grounded in terms of place, while *Gunslinger* is not, though putatively it deals with the American West. But it is the West of the imagination, and not geographical location; the eponymous gunslinger is everywhere and nowhere at once, a single individual permeated by the voices of those around him or her, stopping and starting discussion at will (Perloff x-xi). The displacement of place precedes the decentering of the subject, as the latter is grounded in the territorialization of the former.

It is only in confrontation with difference that the listener can *hear* the presence of many voices as the many voices they are – and thereby encounter their own voices. Poems must transfer the energy of perception into a questionable space in the reader/listener; or rather, poems must transfer the encounter with reality from the imagination of the poet into the imagination of the reader/listener such that experience is rendered questionable, freed from the grids (categories) wherein he or she was initially organized. It is a poetry that plays with language, but is not language play: its purpose is to illuminate “the unearthly bonds of the singular” by “the bright light of shipwreck” (Oppen, *Numerous* 86, 88); it is a reevaluation of the “romantic” heritage of both modernism and postmodernism: “But our understanding of poetry is still profoundly

influenced by romanticism, if only because modernism and postmodernism are dialectical responses to it" (Kirsch 320). It is a poetry that finds hope in the singular by virtue of the plural, a poetry that utilizes above all an ambiguity both with regard to form and content and that in the hope that in these imaginative confrontations a more empowered, genuine relationship to reality is engendered. Only by questioning our sense of "place" can we begin to imagine new places and go there; poetry ought to exploit deliberate ambiguity by means of metaphor and symbol, forcing a sense of the "double-exposed" photograph that is our self's reflection on itself David Baker speaks of.

I think Oppen was right when he wrote on one of his scraps of paper "We are entering a new era," a "post post modernism" (Oppen, *Fragments* 187). I hope my work is successful as illustrating the poetry of this new era. No narratives, but ourselves.

Endnotes

¹For a description of traditional "idealist" epistemology – the view that the mind structures experience such that what can be known in experience is its subjective element – consult Manuel Velasquez's "Antirealism: The New Idealists" in *Philosophy: A Text with Readings*, 7th ed. (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1999), 208-15; "idealism" as a term is generally broken down into an epistemological component, described above, and an ontological component, in which the existence of an objective reality external to the subject is denied. The "new" idealists spoken of in Velasquez' discussion all draw their strength from the view that language is the shaper of experience and that without language there could be no experience as such. "Traditional idealists" would include Immanuel Kant's transcendental idealism (epistemological idealism) and

Hegel's historical *Absolut* (ontological idealism): see the introduction to Volume VII of Frederick Copleston's *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1-31.

²The first thesis refers to Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, the second to the antirealism stated in Note 1, and the third refers to the charge of relativism launched against postmodernism by its conservative critics; on this latter, see Johnson's refutation (11-16). For the first thesis: "‘Truth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. ‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A ‘regime’ of truth" (Foucault, *Power* 132-3); for Deleuze's notion that the primary use of language is to exert force, see Deleuze, *Plateaus* 79-91; "From the moment that there is meaning there are nothing but signs. *We think only in signs*" (Derrida, *Grammatology* 50).

³Just *how* faulty an instrument language is in determining the reality of the real – of accurately describing objective referents – is of course dependent on the postmodernist his or herself. For Derrida, language was riddled with absences present as traces for a subject decentered by the *differences* constituting language itself: the subject is predisposed to pursue the closure of these absences, as the pining after and pursuit of lost origins, what Derrida calls the transcendental signified: see Derrida, *Grammatology* 50; Derrida, *Positions* 18-29. Some postmodernists merely seek to rehabilitate a notion of truth not tied down to eternal certainties: see Johnson (14-5).

⁴The dissolution of the Cartesian *cogito* is one of postmodernism's primary targets:

Descartes postulated the conception of the subject as a self-enclosed, unitary entity in possession of transparently known eternal truths (math, logic) that yield certain judgments on external states-of-affairs. Brian Massumi describes Deleuze's attacks on the notion of a stable, referentially solid "I" as follows: "Every society reproduces standardized contexts within which every word spoken echoes those spoken in all the others. Every word is laden with the implicit presupposition of what 'one' says-thinks-does in such a circumstance. 'I' is not an expressive subject, only a linguistic marker indicating what body is addressed by the whispered imperative immanent to that particular position within that particular state of things. What effectively speaks is the transpersonal agency that creates the context by orchestrating a local encounter between the content and expression by bringing that body to the 'I' of that site. The 'I' does not inhabit the body, but is attached to the place of enunciation. . . . Every body has as many 'I's as there are 'ones' in the world it moves through" (Massumi 33). Derrida followed Heidegger's decentering of the Cartesian ego by means of an understanding of human being (*da-sein*) as the routine *motions*, the social activities (which include language) it has been socialized into accepting without question – and our not recognizing ourselves as primarily linguistic entities structured by *differance* is one of the routines of thought we accept without critique: ". . . the subject is not present, nor above all present to itself before *differance*, that the subject is constituted only in being divided from itself, in becoming space, in temporizing, in deferral" (Derrida, *Positions* 29).

⁵"The epithet "Modernism" came into currency not from the artists themselves (they thought of themselves modern but not modernist), but from critics of the sixties and seventies retroactively and reflexively commenting on a cultural period now past The Postmodernist

break with Modernism, in poetry at least, took place over two generations of poets. . . The poetry of the Cold War period set out the defining features of Postmodernism before critics introduced the term: a deepening sense of the mind's alienation from nature and of the world's alienation from reality; an intensified experience of material randomness and temporal flux, of moral relativity and psychological alienation, of epistemological confusion and metaphysical doubt; a drastic scaling down of expectations and aspirations; a questioning of language as a medium of perception and communication; a shift from hypostasizing poetry as a completed work to investigating it as an inconclusive process of provisional improvisation" (Gelpi 524). We may add that there is a preoccupation with the irrelevancy of form as such for understanding reality; this thought carries with it the notion that any consideration of form is inherently oppressive, providing a sense of false closure with its organizational logic. Ron Silliman is a good representative of the anti-formalist view of postmodernism; in his *Tjanting*, an entire poem is constructed according to the mathematical Fibonacci series – 1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21, etc. – in which each numeral is the sum of the preceding two. As such, it makes a good case for the irrelevancy of formal models as modes of comprehending an objectivity beyond itself: "Not this./What then?/I started over & over. Not this./Last week I wrote "the muscles in my palm so sore from halving the rump roast I cld barely grip the pen." What then? This morning my lip blisterd" (Silliman 490). *Tjanting* illustrates Silliman's contention that he could write in "new sentences" which escape the false closure of traditional narrative; *Tjanting* is described by critic/poet Paul Hoover as a "disjunctive mosaic" (Hoover 490).

"Even in modernism (which would include symbolism, imagism, objectivism,

among others), there is the notion that form determines content to a large degree – the point is to find the proper form for finding the self’s unity with self, others and nature amid a modern way of life in which ceaseless change is a primary fact due to the growth of technology, capitalism and mass marketing: “The symbolist poem is the poem animated, not so much by the voice breathing life into it, as by the mobile eye wandering restlessly back and forth over the page, ensnared in an ever-recurrent and variously momentous instant” (Scott 207); “Modernism is less a style than a search for a style in a highly individual sense” (Bradbury and McFarlane 29). Modernism, however, is different from postmodernism in the latter’s extreme skepticism toward language’s capacity for describing anything approaching reality – indeed, the various forms poems take for modernists express a desire to capture reality in itself by twisting ordinary language beyond all bounds to get at the truth of things: “The great works of modernism live amidst the tools of modern relativism, skepticism, and hope for secular change; but they balance on the sensibility of transition, often holding in suspension the forces that persist in the past and those that grow from the novel present. They turn on ambiguous images . . .” (Bradbury and McFarlane 49).

⁷For Kierkegaard’s description of “the public,” see *The Present Age* (Kierkegaard 258-69); for Heidegger’s description of *das Man* (the generic “one”, the “they”) see *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), part VI, sec. 26, 114-30 (Heidegger, *Being* 107-22).

⁸“What I mean is this: in a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and

these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (Foucault, *Two Lectures* 93).

⁹A "nomad" for Deleuze is one who has abandoned the "territorialization" of space by the "abstract machine" (see Deleuze, *Plateaus* 53-56); this essentially means that individuals have cast off their ideological moldings into socially acceptable categories. Deleuze's term "territorialization" is akin to what I term "mapping."

¹⁰Deleuze and Foucault trace the trajectory of force inhabiting language in different manners, but Deleuze's (it seems to me) view appears to me to have worked out his view more rigorously; power is imbued in language in terms of the face: "...the abstract machine of faciality assumes a role of selective response, or choice: given a concrete face, the machine judges whether it passes or not, whether it goes or not, on the basis of the elementary facial units. This time, the binary relation is of the "yes-no" type. The empty eye or black hole absorbs or rejects . . . The face of a given teacher is contorted by tics and bathed in an anxiety that makes it a 'no go'" (Deleuze, *Plateaus* 177). In this way, Deleuze claims that force is an "over-coded" aftereffect of language, effected through the face – words are essentially "orders" (order-words, Deleuze's term is *mot 'ordre*) command that is an excess, a surplus of the machinic effect of language that is not captured in the content of the language itself (see Deleuze, *Plateaus* 114-7; Massumi 26-34; on the relation between ideology and force, see Massumi 154).

¹¹"Consciousness of self according to the determinations of our state in inner perception is merely empirical, and always changing. No fixed and abiding self can present itself in this flux of

inner appearances. Such consciousness is usually named *inner sense*, or *empirical apperception*. What has *necessarily* to be represented as numerically identical cannot be thought as such through empirical data . . . This pure original unchanging consciousness I shall name *transcendental apperception*. . . The numerical unity of this apperception is thus the *a priori* ground of all concepts . . .” (Kant, A 107-8, 136). Heidegger pointed out, however, that since the form of understanding operative in “inner sense” or introspection is the pure form of time itself, then the “I think” Kant seeks to derive cannot be numerically identical – as time is not a unity in any formal sense (Heidegger, *Kant* sec. 28, 99-109), as time is constructed in the free, creative (and hence arbitrary and “finite”) projection of the *da-sein* toward its future, in terms of goals; this to Heidegger meant that human being was a nothingness, but a positive nothingness in which the difference between “being” and “beings” was preserved – an activity of finding oneself in the act of pursuing selfhood in terms of a goal and finding meaning in the things in one’s environment because of the goals one is pursuing (Heidegger, *Kant* 167). I think that the apperceptive act Kant is detailing is justifiable, if only the contingent nature of such a apperception is recognized. The individual comes to itself out of the plural, while never entirely leaving it; the individual’s apperception of self is contingent upon changing circumstances, voices, maps, etc.

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Poems

Part One:

Observing

You've Got To

A car door
opens.
Her leg swings out
to the curb.

She taps it twice, then
Pulls
her leg
inside again.

The car starts
up,
turns the corner
and is gone.

You've got to
feel
something. You've just
got to.

Porch lights
turn
black. Curtains are drawn.
Locks click.

Dogs bark
in
dark bare yards. A baby
wails. Water runs.

Helpings

a display case
with many shelves
stocked with pies and cakes

want dessert

scurrying to the phone
holding a tray strewn with empty glasses
and stray dollar bills

no
just looking

picking up the receiver
hunching over the cash register

scribbling in a pad

rooted there
seeing his eyes
in the glass door of the display case

rattling loose change in his pocket

the phone rings again

They, Way Out In A Field

they arrive

in the middle of a barren patch
of shaven corn stalks
over which the deer rut
the stubble crunching beneath their boots

they, way out there –

in skins brown, gray and orange
shotguns nosing upward

they, stamping their feet –

patiently wait for the creeping
shadow of a colossal silo
behind a distant house
to touch a barbed-wire fence

Two-Bit Cut

old plastic barber's pole
beside the door

red stripes
a washed-out pink

hair sparse
on their heads now

but they have always gone
so they return

to bide time
with meaningless talk

bide time
as scissors snap above them

bide time
like those combs

slowly pickling
in big jars of blue juice

It's Over

Children
like persimmons
plump with dark autumn bloat
through the branches. Brutish soles chafe
rusty

blisters
along its hide.
Innocence ripening?
They declasp from boughs wobbling
with mirth

and drop,
one at a time,
plummeting to grass wet
with twilight near the fluted trunk.
Some cry.

Whispering

Two children
flanked her in pink, furry coats,

each with a doll
drooping limply over an arm.

She spoke
and pointed at their feet. They looked

down. She knelt
and held them. Silence. For minutes.

Steam shooting
out of their mouths. Then, she stood

and tugged
them gently to a car parked by a gate,

whispering.

The Death Of Her

she snuffs it

in the tray
while smoke seeps through her teeth

the death of me yet she says
the death of me yet

she stares
in the mirror behind the bartender

and sees another
smoldering in a far foggy corner

like a flare
laid in front of a car wreck at four a.m.

the death of me yet she says
the death of me yet

she crushes
the pack hard in the vice of both hands

only one good one left now she says
one good one left

she gets it

Thirst

annoyed
the tall corn pulses

upset
the green, deep green grass flutters

it rains
I drink

birds flap into trees
cats hunker under eaves
worms writhe in mud
beached

I see it happen and I am hurt by it
yet I watch it
watch it all

watch all this cowardice rise up
out of the soil and stretch itself thin
as string across wet sidewalks

watch all these cars slice through
the surf spraying over their hoods
like kayaks cutting through rapids

watch that dog next door
huddle under a window
whining and scratching at the wall

again and again

it rains
I fill my glass

Dark On Dark

Rain clouds are much better seen
with sunglasses:

each roiling puff a bas-relief
of cotton balls and dandelion fluff

in ash,

birds blemishing
the fornicating brew;

thumbprint intaglios
punched into gray satin sheets –

slept-in,

ruffled,

empty,

cold.

Part Two:

Navigating

Directions

hammerhead sharks ride
a magnetic highway

cruising avenues paved
with the aura of earth itself

while all else is cold
and still and black

following urges charged
by pulses surging

through the poles
of their magnetic heads

what can they know
of being lost

what it's like
to be adrift with no lodestone

to simply feel
your pulse tapping out

empty ciphers
of abandonment

while all else
is cold and still and black

Theme

Think of this:

a piece of string,
pulled taught,
knotted
in the middle.

Now -

follow
that length of string
with your mind's eye,
beginning at one end

then

in and around
and out through
the loops of the knot

along to the other end,
where it

suddenly

Repetition

There are
two
of them.
One
sits on the steel filing cabinet.
Another,
Thin, tubular, and black
stands on the floor. The
one
on the filing cabinet
works, but the
one
on floor does not.
I need them
both.
They mean something,
placed beside
one
another like that.
I'm sure of it.

The Theater Of Our Epiphanies

is

always

only ourselves.

is home only to our

own likenesses refracted

by those chance, explosive moments

ignited by the presence of another face full

in our eyes. is where we dwell when we close our eyes

and find our fancies reflected on the surface of calm dark water.

The Universe

Lovers

Quarreling over their likes

And dislikes

After a long night of drink

In a bar

Neither particularly

Cares for,

Taking a cigarette break,

Then starting in all over

Again all over

Again.

Word Things

a breath blasting a mist
across cold morning panes of glass
instantly contracting to its center

crutches of ice on a hot day

toads flopping across a road
with all signs downed by heavy winds

things glimpsed running through the cupboards
out of the corner of my eye
and only out of the corner of my eye

sparks shot through water
repeatedly

fine sprays of salt water
beading the tops of freshly waxed cars
dying mercilessly in the heat

smells of coffee imbricated in
the dust and pollen
coursing through open morning windows

I depend on these things
things without strings
things moving of their own accord
hand over hand on a scaffolding of air

I depend on the invisible
to clothe my nakedness
a dumb grin on my face

on single strands of spider silk
at the ends of which
their makers dangle small and black
against yellowing tiles and dripping faucets

on things humming out in the streets
and up through the trees
above the shattered nests of mourning birds

to meet that bloodless midnight eye
gazing through the warren of jagged limbs
that eye flitting over the surfaces
of freshly washed cars
newly-spun webs
and the black mirrors windows become at night

I depend on these things
doomed
restless
and gone alive

Let Us Praise Fire

no

let us all praise fire

let us watch it spaniel-eyed in the country dark
transported by its repetitive, rooted fury

the power of hell condensed to the size
of an aluminum shed

neon-orange menhir
perpetually ablaze with the energy of always
totem of our faithless reliance on an eternal there
symbol of exuberant wasteful distress

we must watch it
praise it

we must pull over the pickup
out of knee-jerk longing
guided by a Paleolithic insight
into the balm of its angry fluid core

praise

its sounding roars spizzing enormous
and strangely content

reciting its catechism of harsh hissing hunger
in a parceled-off section of an otherwise empty field
fenced-in where its many nerves boom outward
held up by the surrendering arms of gargantuan militiamen
caught with their pants down

glutted with its surfeit of reserve
it floods the deficit of its relays
with a superfluous joy
born in *noblesse oblige*

the very essence of fire

of awe

so

let us praise fire

no

let us all praise fire

let us treat it with proper reverence
like those policemen and firemen
standing there helplessly
annealed in its flickering presence

like those
perched on the hoods of cars and trucks
or standing on the shoulder of the highway
or in the field

or like myself
catching glimpses of it in the rearview mirror

watching it

like Moses must have
when removing his shoes in the presence of a God
who took it upon Himself to dress in flames
consuming nothing

nothing but itself

this radiantly intense conflagration
that eats nothing and shits no ash or smoke

so

let us defer to it
raise no hand against it
but with our shoes on
admire its untutored *élan vitale*
its consumptive assumption of being

then let us see
if our new devotion
has been made material
in newsprint the next morning

Landfill

it grows nearer
every day
the flag riding atop the uncannily green
carpet of grass that covers its hump
getting closer

soon it will be here

and then what

in the distance
to the east of the bend in the road
is a gash in its skin
a cross-sectional cut

an inner core the color of rust
on top of that
a thin layer of dark chocolate matter
on top of that
the too-green grass
on top of that
a backhoe
its one crooked finger knuckled downward

yet
it grows nearer
every day

a wild animal
eating only at night
consuming the bottomlands
until the whole hungry beast
nuzzles the shoulder of the road
flag-tagged hump throwing a shadow
across the faces of drivers in passing cars

and then what

Part Three:

Exploring

Fetal Wreck

swollen

belly swallowed

inside steel

skulls smacking against skulls

thudding melons

dropping to the floor

swimming inside cars swimming

screeching ecstatic

fiber-glass and aluminum

spiders in a post-nuptial embrace

heatedly pursuing

the sweetly anticipated

climax

that

is

Dead Fly In Toilet

Dead fly in toilet
hopelessly impolitic
I see my face there

Dead fly in toilet
idling about the center
hagiographic

Dead fly in toilet
surfing the iconic slick
suicide, I think

Dead fly in toilet
half sunk in yellowy stink
I'm getting sick

Dead fly in toilet
six stiff still legs skim the brink
it doesn't seem fair

Dead fly in toilet
flushed down its watery snare
shaking dick, I blink

Eight Uses For The Urine Of Celebrities Serving Hard Time

mixed with the last daub of paint on a canvass depicting a foggy midnight cityscape serving as the backdrop for a third-grade performance of *Endgame* at a school for the rural dispossessed

stirred into the mouthwash of a self-proclaimed sinner sitting on his knees wiping a knife blade on his jeans before a prostitute humming *Camptown Races* while sticking an earthworm in her ear

added to the grease of a tank turret slowly taking aim at a crayoned picture of the rising sun tacked up on the refrigerator of a member of the United States House of Representatives

decocted down to a solvent weakening the rusty bolts of used cars behind a lone pile of volute chunks of metal in the back of a junkyard frequented by cokefiends hiding from their fronts

spritzed into the cocktail of an elderly Klansman fucking a blow-up doll in front of his wife's half- sister bound to a chair the legbone of a cocker-spaniel jammed in her mouth

congealed into a glue cementing together the breastplates of rubber toy Roman soldiers stealing over bomb-pocked piles of earth beside a nude man playing with a *Slinky* on a stack of worn tractor tires

mingled in the cologne of a defrocked priest laying a cairn of heavy stones behind a house burning hot white against a blue noon sky breath strong with garlic and radishes

processed into a cream rubbed on the raw neck of a morbidly obese Rottweiler chained to a bark-stripped tree chewing at his collar stepping in his own shit with every faltering lurch

The Car That Cut A Town In Half

I.

eyes briefly

thrown ahead then blown back

behind

unraveling vertebrae of yellow road spine

behind

that dissipated beyond menaced by the question

aren't all mirrors rearview?

eyes now

slung-locked up forward there

ahead

of silver-sheeted marvels ghost-dancing

ahead

in that ever-fathering vanishing point

forever out of forever's reach

II.

wheels inside boxes

perfect

every point equidistant absolutely from center exact

every humming whirring buzzing reeling

constituent wheel

perfect wheels

wheels inside boxes

but below

wheels dare deign contact

with roads
 blemished scarred disfigured roads
 with all their dash crashing dips and dints –
 the eternal wholeness supreme of wheels
 must kiss mud
 in order to go
 in order to make us go

III.

rubber-squealed screaming long laid very down fissure-rifted concrete puttied with asphalt
 down
 narrow alleys
 plunging unwelcome
 into main street openness
 foot-leveled collapsed pedal
 up-grumbling rods fire-belly-deep
 bomb-pumping drive-pushed over-spilling spins
 desperately shrieking through slick-bricked residential blurs
 oily visceral vibratos humming cheer and disgust steering-column upward
 to numbly-anonymous hands squeeze-fingering lowlands between crests along the wheel

IV.

hear wheels rubber-crushing sharp jagged beads
 the color of shallow water at the edge of shallow sun-blasted seas

impact-splashed shards pebbling the in-between
 of weary bricks long-molested by wheels

something about to something permitting no witness
 but known in them somewhere nonetheless

volume blared lights dimmed
 watching movies kids shouldn't see with kids

beyond these boxes the all outside unknowable
 the all outside that realm where no bored roaming finger

fancy-pecks a sum of facts prettier tasteful and more familiar
 than that which is already out there can possibly deliver

they hear it somehow though zooming near

they hear it now that which is about to

placing spoons slowly on neatly folded napkins
leaving freezer doors ajar water running in basins

walking outside slowly mutely
lining curbs on both sides craning their necks

it is cold it has stopped raining
they feel a rumble under their shoes

moving up into their thighs knotting their stomachs
sighing resigned

it comes they swoon
it is gone they look down

walk inside heavy with fate
sink-water destiny nearly at the knee

thinking of new and improved everything
thinking that though ideals cannot be

bad copies of them can at a very great discount
they think they think they think they think to pursue

the prettiest dolls in dented plywood bins
near the gumball machines of a dollar store

found well up ahead in the always-fathering neverness
that point where all possible horizons converge

shrink and die
let us pursue it they think they think

despite the potholes always met underneath us
whenever we are forced to leave these boxes our homes

V.

eyes hurting

sun awl-punching vision black

again

lighting up the suffering there in back

again

light conspiring with far-off road

imaged in the nothing beyond

eyes immobilized

stuck-heaved on vanishing essences

out

where the very stuff of things is annihilated

out

there where imperfection scours

smooth innocence off newborn wheels

The Big Grain Mill On North Street In The Middle Of Town

t it sits there sq
 uatting amid crumbling bricks and chipped wo
 rn streets is shame enough but that it nestles so comf
 ortably on its own decay is an obscenity it posse
 sses a scenic squalor i guess a graywalled gothic g
 randeur gruesome its being there always preening proud o
 f itself no one can tell you how it got there espe
 cially those inside it there is an inside to it there mus
 t be isnt there an inside to everything men and wome
 n but mostly men trudge past that chainlink fenc
 e daily little rivulets of sweat streaming down thei
 r cheeks showing something to someone in a rundow
 n kiosk before being allowed to enter it las
 ts it persists to be blind to birth is to be ignorant of d
 eath but we drive on by anyway look whose around i
 t drunk they are always drunk the ones who cannot d
 rive on by flashing smiles at us who can they hav
 e to be drunk no one could live with the kn
 owledge of it and what it does no one you have t
 o admire it though jutting illplaced corrugated boxes of w
 hich it is composed stacked on top of and bes
 ide one another like lego blocks connected by tinker to
 ys to lincoln logs you have to admire its man
 y many roofs adjacent across adjoining one another an i
 ncestuous orgy of pipes and cables and at the bott
 om of it all concrete mooring the fence meshed acros
 s its lots keeping the drones buzzing about the hive w
 hile we drive on by it is a puzzle strewn across our fo
 rmicatopped kitchen tables jumbled pieces m
 aking sense only to sullen children we drive on by t
 oo immersed in its disguised complexity yet its sol
 ution is simple so close we cannot see it our gras
 p of it is weak so we drive on by yet it is so obvious in
 side it is space and rooms and bigger rooms and sw
 ooping walkways and catwalks and huge doors and lit
 tle doors and tubes and noise and wires and men and tr
 ucks and trains and men and grain and forklif
 ts and a few gals and men and a yard covered with as
 phalt bleached by time the color of ashes and al
 uminum and men and burlap sacks and to top it off that f
 ence around it to keep all that to itself what do th

ey do these men and a few women what do they think do
es every notion sink to the bottom and submerg
e in the mud can they feel it with their toes like musse
ls in a creek bed can they pitch it across glowing e
mbers and scoop out the chewy insides insides no they ca
nt they need it it needs them god jeezus it is big they s
ay they come at night to feed it when the moon is nev
er around when the roaches under the streetlights sca
mper for food they come at night hooting their hor
ns and stopping traffic so we cannot drive on b
y they snake along the rails and disgorge thems
elves and men who are so inside it they ha
ve lost their own insides pack it away it is an i
ntestinal tract it assimilates and secretes what we wol
f down at the dinner table after having shoved the pi
eces of the puzzle to the floor just look at it ther
e its scabrous skin of metal stretched taut over its s
keleton of ibeams and wood like a leprous dow
ager acting like shes still the belle of the b
all but at least when the stoparms so ominousl
y lift and the bells stop dinging and the track
s are clear we can dri

The Fourfold Path of Nourishing Wrath

1 *Allow it room to expand –*

plenty of space

for the guillotine to throw its shadow
across the floor and up the wall

behind a musty old sofa
with its spare pattern
of old, mysterious stains

and a large brown vase
holding dusty plastic
sheaves of grass:

2 *Pick a good target, then do nothing –*

say, someone made substance in deep sleep

a dream [lingering longer
than yesterday's desires

(possessing a kind of stalwart wholeness –

stolid undeviating impassive

/a granite
column
thick and
pale
chipped
with the

violence
of time
in a Grec
ian field
next to
empty
parking
lots near
McDonald's
at 3:17 a.m./

like the laws)] of mathematics

(the math we learn
in seventh grade
scratching our balls
and dreaming of pussy
or rubbing our pussy
and dreaming of balls
or any other possibility
rendered precise
by the biological
coefficients
of cock and cunt)

ignoring the wretched simian smile
every one of us wears
when we look in the plastic enclosing
the bars of the monkey cage

a feral, archaic smile
masking the choked urge
to drop our pants

shit

dead center in the palms
of our cupped hands
and chuck it right back at the chimps

behind our reflections
a dream of you in your basement
where appears someone [never
seen or thought of anymore

(a bit player in the B-movie unspooling
against the screen of memories

that comprises your life;

verite ', almost, in a black and white
of harsh amateurish contrast)]

holding open a black plastic garbage bag
packed with five pounds of high-grade pot

and this guy (you never see or think about
anymore
and who probably never even liked you
when you did see and think about him)

slips a bicycle chain around the neck of another guy

suddenly

(the nebulous presence
of an acquaintance
brought to thought
in an emaciated schema
of what he was years ago)

and strangles him in front of you

/hear that . . .
the quiet
hummin
g of your
psychic
economy

(QED
it
whispers)/

right there

in that damp basement
(mildew propagating in black fury
up the wet-darkened walls)

there

(along a deserted stretch
of lakefront mud
the hood
of an old
car
dips
below
rippling
bubbling water
shadowed by tall elms)

/you did it
just to do it
and it
didn't
bother
you
you seem to
seem
to remember/

we need to take care of this
you think you remember

[him saying

(you're not quite sure
but you know
that even if you were sure

you're sure you wouldn't care)]

/you did it
just to do it
and you felt
only
t
he
t
he
only
having-doneness
of it all/

returning along that mud road

spotting an elongated plastic
black garbage bag
tied-off at the top
stretched out across a puddle

(you know who)

indifference
telekinetically alchemizes
into well-constricted certitude

by

/mathematical
maybes/

a manifestation of that other guy again
the guy you never see or think about
holding that big bag of pot up to your face
you seem to remember him saying

it's all taken care of

and yet

/like any other
add

led
Euclid
 rubbing
 his dick
and staring at
his simulacrum
in the glass
of the monkey
cage
the
 thought
 crosses
 your
 mind
that here
reflected upon
the thin

surface

of your retina,
 is the
 Platonic
 form of
 man
 the
 image of
 man
in diapers
shaking a rat
tle
with one hand
and carv
ing
 the text
of *Common*
Sense
in his chest
with a shard
of glass
 from a
 broke n
 bab

y bottle
n
ipple
still
d
ripping
m
i
l

k/

you can't help
but think someone is going to open
that bag up very soon

and this feeling

(born in the nihilism
of knowing
you will always have this feeling)

should guide the choice of targets never to be pursued:

3 *Think and speak in the right way –*

understand your victims

frame them between your fingers

(as Stroheim must have done
brandishing a riding crop
raging about in his jodhpurs
screaming
action action
rolling the cameras
before anyone is ready
pronouncing the ossified fright
of those raped into representation
perfect perfect perfect)

/Suttree sat
near Knoxville
leafing through
the yellow
ed pages
of a photo
album and
could
not believe
the "gaga"
on the faces
of the
temporal
ly
arrested
young-
then-
now-dead/

every noun a picture

d
every picture
d
false
d

every one of the named
embalmed
and displayed deceased

the transience
of cosmetic closure
shut tight and buried

close
d
because forgettable
be
cause
hid
den

/pin
s tight
through the
heart
into wax
through
to the
cardboar
d
wing
s
spread wide
desic
cate
edly
preserved
icon-n
ed
into sculpture
s
changing their
pose
s from
day to
day
as Socrates
describe
d the
statues
of Deadalus/

by using the right names

[this requires a clean conscience

(a tape measure, a screwdriver –
have plenty on hand
in your
toolbox)]

at the right time

on those many evenings

under sorcerous skies
dial
ing the phone
nervous
ly
in a puke-splattered booth
someone
bleed
ing and
moan
ing in the gutter
beside your car

/and
bring a
shove
I too/:

4 *Own a broken gun –*

you'll need a weapon that won't work

with some heft to it
a war surplus .45 perhaps

[it's value spent

(nevertheless immersing you{i
in effervescent waves
of satisfaction because it feels
so good so right in your{mine hand)]

it must be of such a nature
as to continue the design
with its pressure on your{my rib cage
or your{my hip or ankle or pocket

it must impress its consequence

on even leering old men
bent over the engines of cars
under dented hoods
grease-caked fingernails
tracing a silhouette of you { me
on the radiator cap

[(you just
know they are)

/essential
to pulp
trench coats
bloating
in grit-peppered
breezes gusting
around the
corners
of old buildings
rudely erect
behind which
rats
scuff their
whiskers and
twitter

and wait

where pimps
pine mercilessly
alone
picking their
noses
pheming for
crack

leaning
against

brownst
one
nightmar
es of
abandonment
and neglect and
want

. . . wait/

continuing the saga]

/be sure to get
to makeup and
getafed
ora or
you{i
won't
match
the scenario/

you{i finger the trigger
rubbing the hoop of steel
tapping the butt
as they approach

let them draw near

/pet
the rats
and
wait . . . /

it is cold
and rattles in your{my pocket

it announces itself

in tics of Adam's apples
in twitchings of brows
in pissings of pants

it must only be for show

a coeval mixture
of the grievously mature
and shock-blunted laughable

/a clown
 squirting
a lapel flower
 in a
 child's
 eye
 then
kicking
 her
 t
 o the
floor/

grump-faced cherubs
fallen from grace
soaked in gin and juice
sitting on curbs
in front of decrepit
single-story houses
roofs of worn and pitted shingles
sides prolapsed
smiling

but you{i feel the pressure of their import

[it feels good in your{mine pocket
(let them draw near)]

/whatever it is
that keeps
your{my hand
glued
to the stock
finds sustenance
 in the
 tear

s
o
f
a
c
h
i
l
d
l
y

ing on
her side

looking up
at a clown

closing

the big
top's
tent-flap
door

be
hind
him/

and don't bother with bullets

(but wear your{my trench coat
fedora
and sunglasses)

[strike a pose (worthy of Alain Delon, at least

the best you{i can do, really

Bogart being out of your{my league)]

allow your index finger
to caress lightly
the sweat-greased trigger

force yourself to smile

/... wait/.

Curtains Are Incredible

curtainsareincredibledevicesfor

sh(de / vice / s[?] vices of ~~shaded~~)ade

... (SHADE) ...

when
pulled
down
tight

{[(shut in) + (shut off)] = "cell block 1"}

but/or

is /the/a/your problems*simply*[qui(e)t/e/si (m)pl(e)/y/]:

apathy/(eosis) { APATHY(!) }

({[re]FUSING})/

coalescingintoone:

{1) d/ i /rect(ed)bit of ; 2) e

Ne
RgY}.

E_{xcept} { [(monad)_{/o/lo} G_{ically, y} O_{u know}] }

to

pulldown_{/the/} (privacy) CURTAINS.